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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BU](#) [FI](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/BURMA: FINNISH ASEM INVITATION TO
BURMESE FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: STATE 124139

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew J Schofer; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Although the GONL avoided inviting the Burmese to any EU fora during their 2005 EU Presidency, it insists such an invitation is consistent with EU procedures (per reftel). The Dutch are not actively pushing to reverse the Finnish decision. End summary.

¶2. (C) Poloffs delivered reftel demarche August 1 to MFA Southeast Asia Policy Officer Maurice Pourchez. The MFA, according to Pourchez, will not seek to influence the Finns on the matter. Pourchez underscored the strong Dutch aversion to the invitation/visa issuance but said that EU rules do allow invitations in cases where human rights in Burma may be addressed. Poloffs responded that, according to Pourchez's own office, the Burmese foreign minister has relatively little influence within the regime and his presence at an EU forum can do little to further human rights in Burma.

¶3. (C) Pourchez said that the GONL intends, during the summit, to be "very aggressive" in their criticism of Burma, thus having an impact on the attitudes of other ASEAN countries toward Burma. Poloffs repeated to Pourchez our concern that proposed meetings between the Finnish PM and the Burmese FM, as well as the possible troika bilats with the Burmese, were likely only to lend legitimacy to the Burmese regime.

¶4. (C) Pourchez further defended the GONL's (and the EU's) approach, saying that ASEAN has previously threatened to not cooperate with the EU, if individual ASEAN members were excluded from ASEM and other fora. The GONL, he said, therefore feels compelled to deal with Burma, even while trying to keep the focus on human rights.

¶5. (C) DCM and PolCouns separately reiterated reftel points with acting Director General for Political Affairs Wim Geerts. DCM reminded Geerts that the Dutch had made a point of not inviting the Burmese during their 2005 EU Presidency. Geerts acknowledged this, but did not indicate that the Dutch intended to take a strong stand against Burmese attendance at the ASEM meeting. He underscored, however, the GONL's own strong stance on Burma's human rights record.
BLAKEMAN